

THE OBJECTIVE FORCE: A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO ARMY TRANSFORMATION

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Introduction

During the Cold War, the United States designed, trained, organized, and equipped its military forces to confront and deter the former Soviet Union. The end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union dramatically changed the nature and types of threats confronting the United States. Simply put, the United States no longer faces a peer competitor capable of matching U.S. military capabilities. The bipolar world of the Cold War has been replaced by asymmetrical threats from regional, transnational, and terrorist actors. And as the events of September 11, 2001, demonstrated, we are faced with adversaries who are willing and eager to bring the fight to our Nation's shores.

To meet this threat, the Army has embarked on a transformational effort that will remake the world's pre-eminent ground forces into a force whose capabilities and strengths will continue dominance across the full spectrum of conflict. Nearly 4 years ago, Army Chief of Staff GEN Eric K. Shinseki prophetically outlined how the Army would transform itself from the force that won the Cold War to a lighter, more agile, more lethal force—the Objective Force (OF)—capable of countering any threat posed by its adversaries. His vision highlights the soldier as the centerpiece and ensures that our Army remains capable of meeting any current threat while adding new capabilities and leveraging the tremendous advances in information and other key technology.

Transformation Effort

The first axis of the Army transformation effort is the selective modernization and recapitalization of our

existing, or Legacy Forces. Our heavy and light Legacy Forces characterized by the Abrams tank, Bradley Fighting Vehicle, Apache helicopter, and 14 other critical systems were the cornerstone of our success in the Persian Gulf War and will continue to play an important role in our Nation's defense. We will selectively upgrade these forces with new engines and upgraded weapon systems and bring them back to zero hours and zero miles. These upgrades will ensure that equipment capabilities remain unmatched while we transform the rest of the force.

Concurrently with improving our Legacy Forces, the Army is fielding new, Interim Forces that will bridge the gap between the Legacy Force and introduction of the first OF unit in 2008. These forces, known as Stryker Brigade Combat Teams (SBCTs), will be centered on the Stryker family of wheeled fighting vehicles. Starting in 2003, the Army will field six SBCTs during the next 5 years. These new, lighter forces will, in combination with advanced air- and sealift capabilities, give the United States the ability to project military force more easily and more directly worldwide.

As the Army modernizes and recapitalizes the Legacy Force and fields the SBCTs, it is also developing our future Army—the Objective Force. The Army is pursuing an aggressive plan that builds forces and technologies to meet future demands without sacrificing training and readiness of today's warfighter. It is a detailed program of change that retains the mental and physical toughness that has always characterized our forces. At the same time, it harnesses new technologies of the information age to make us faster, more flexible, and more lethal.

Holistic Change

The Objective Force is not simply a new weapons program; it is nothing less than the complete transformation of today's Army to meet tomorrow's challenges. It is holistic change—Doctrine, Training, Leader development, Organizations, People, and Facilities. OF units will be more strategically responsive, deployable, agile, versatile, lethal, survivable, and sustainable across the full spectrum of military operations. They will support decisive maneuvers—horizontal and vertical, day and night—in all weather and terrain as dismounted or mounted combined arms teams with unyielding unit integrity.

In addition, OF units will be capable of destroying enemy formations at longer ranges with smaller calibers, greater precision, and more devastating effects. Innovative sustainment concepts and capabilities, improvements in reliability, maintainability, and sustainability; and reach operations will reduce demands for consumables and support such as water, fuel, and maintenance. This will result in a smaller logistical footprint and greater operational agility.

What is new about the Objective Force is the manner in which the Army can execute maneuver warfare. In the past, maneuver was largely linear, meaning ground forces met on the ground and attempted to outflank each other or break through at vulnerable spots. Innovations such as airborne assaults and helicopter landings added a new dimension to maneuver warfare, but once committed, these forces became light infantry, lacking the hitting power and survivability of the mechanized units. The Objective Force seeks to combine the best of both

heavy and light forces and employ them in innovative and unprecedented ways.

The value of OF precision maneuver is that units enter a theater at a time and place of the Army's choosing rather than at typical ports of debarkation like airfields and ports, thus rendering an enemy's anti-access strategies useless. Gaining this positional advantage is critical because it allows us to maintain a fire-and-maneuver advantage over the enemy. If enemies seek to mass forces against us, they can be destroyed by precision strike. If they seek to disperse, dig in, or retreat, we can maneuver in and destroy them piecemeal. The simultaneous creation of precision fire and maneuver, enabled by advanced information and decision technology provides us with an unparalleled combat overmatch capability.

The equipment of OF units will allow for rapid target identification and accurate fires. Units can quickly fire and maneuver on any enemy with greater accuracy from greater distances. OF units will also move, shoot, and re-engage faster than the enemy, denying him rest or opportunity to regain the initiative and allowing us to rapidly transition to the next mission.

Information Technology

A critical element underpinning the Objective Force is the advancement of information technology. In past wars, having timely and correct information was always important. In future wars, it will be the difference between decisive victory and quagmire. The OF will use the power of information as a weapon against our enemies. We will see them first, make the right decisions before they do, and decisively engage and destroy them first. In short, we will make every engagement an ambush.

Harnessing information will give us knowledge superiority, which will be a characteristic built into all aspects of the OF. Information technology connects satellites, modern sensors, and advanced communications systems with advanced ground combat systems of the Objective Force. These units will be able to tap into a grid of space, ground, and airborne sensors that together form an integrated network.

This network will include all Services and is constructed to ensure that the right information gets to the right unit at the right time.

Future Combat Systems (FCS)

The ground hardware centerpiece of the Objective Force is the FCS. Built as a system-of-systems, FCS will encompass manned and unmanned air and ground vehicles, including unmanned reconnaissance and strike platforms networked together to create an integrated team on the battlefield. To bring this vision to reality, the Army has moved away from the traditional acquisition process paradigm by employing a lead system integrator (LSI) approach.

The Army LSI team—led by Boeing and Science Applications International Corp. (SAIC)—will develop the architecture for the system-of-systems envisioned for the FCS. The team will also identify and evaluate potential concepts and technologies, conduct demonstrations, and select the most promising efforts for further definition. The work accomplished by the LSI team will ensure that the FCS Program is ready to transition from the concept and technology development phase into the system development and demonstration phase. The LSI approach affords opportunities to insert leap-ahead technology upgrades when they are mature, to incorporate best business practices, and to ensure an integrated effort from all concerned.

The Army has established a strategic partnership with the science and technology (S&T) community to bring the FCS from the research and development phase to reality. Through a spiral development process, innovations in commonality, modularity, and interoperability will provide technology insertions to ensure that technology development seamlessly meshes with the acquisition process. Approximately 97 percent of the Army's current S&T budget is devoted to bringing the FCS online in 2008. Additionally, the Army is working to decrease the sustainment demands of the FCS through the introduction of hybrid electric power, onboard water generation, embedded diagnostics and prognostics, modular systems, platform commonality,

increased system reliability, and brilliant munitions. This will reduce the need for the typical "iron-mountain" approach to logistics involving large amounts of water, fuel, ammunition, and maintenance support.

Conclusion

The Army has completed the development of the conceptual underpinnings for the OF and the FCS. We are in the process of transitioning from the S&T phase to the research and development and procurement phase. The Army LSI recently announced a teaming agreement to build the FCS manned ground vehicle. Additionally, the final draft of the *2015 Objective Force White Paper* was recently published. This white paper details how the Objective Force will be used in 2015 as a critical combat multiplier for any joint forces commander. We have many milestones and inchstones remaining in making the OF a reality, but we have already made substantial progress and will continue on this path to success.

As mentioned earlier, Army transformation is not simply about fielding new weapon systems or innovative tactics. It is holistic in nature, a revolution in Doctrine, Training, Leader development, Organizations, People, and Facilities. At its core, however, remains the American fighting soldier. The most technologically advanced platforms and all the weapons in the world are useless without the intellect, dedication, and remarkable sense of duty of the American soldier. Transformation is about empowering soldiers to fulfill the Army's nonnegotiable contract to fight and win our Nation's wars.

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